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Women have always been viewed differently in society than men. Males have always been given the dominant role since the beginning of time. Even today in society, some women are still held to a lower standard than men in certain countries, such as China. Past historical figures, such as Rosa Parks stood up to help influence the future lives of women for the better. In the novel *The House of Mirth*, we are introduced to the lively character of Ms. Lily Bart. Lily is one of the few fortunate who has options and can make a decision on how she plans to live out her future. Gerty Farish plays a role in Lily’s life as constant reminder that it is possible to live your life as an independent and not have to live with the pressure to decide on whom to marry, or how to obtain a high social status. Lily also struggles with not having consistent financial stability, and how to keep her status high on the social ladder. Though Lily is given a lot of options, her strife increases throughout the novel as we learn how society can turn their backs on you. Once Lily has come to the realization that her and Lawrence Selden were meant to be together, it was too late.

Throughout the course of the novel, Lily bounces between having different ideas and opinions of what she is to do with her own life. Having multiple options was a gift that Lily was blessed with, unlike other women during her era, who were not as fortunate. Lawrence Selden, the close friend, is one of the few options. The downfall of Selden is that he does not have the wealth to offer Lily that she desires, but instead, offers his attention and love for her and gains her true happiness. Mr. Simon Rosedale, who Lily does not really care for or get a long with, but has plenty of riches to provide for Lily and luxuries to dish at her very wish. Not only was Lily given these options, but she also was given the opportunity to choose between George Dorset and Percy Gryce at certain points. Not only does Lily face the stress of whom to marry, she also faces rumors that she is pursing affairs with multiple men as well, which we know as a reader, is false.

Although Gerty Farish is an independent woman just casually living her life, she does not have the looks that Lily has. Men do not see her as they see Lily because of her bland looks. After Lily leaves the yacht, she finds Gerty Farish, whom is a prime example of woman in the 1900’s who are independent and are able to care for themselves. Though Gerty is single and lives in a flat by herself, she gave womanhood a different outlook on life and shows that there is hope for women who are struggling out there. Gerty does not follow the pressure of having to marry for social status or stability.

Apart from having struggles on where to go and what to choose, Lily has a difficult time keeping money in her pocket because she constantly gambles it away and spends it excessively on lavish things that are not a necessity to her health or well being. Because of Lily’s indecisiveness, she suffers consequences that cause her to loose her superior standing on the social ladder in her circle of friends, as well as struggles financially. Lily’s parents taught her that her looks were everything, and her mom encouraged her to marry someone wealthy. “That’s Lily all over, you know: she works like a slave preparing the ground and sowing her seed; but the day she ought to be reaping the harvest she oversleeps herself or goes off on a picnic.” (Wharton, 303) This quote is a good way to describe Lily. She spends a lot of time building herself up to make a big decision that she cannot follow through with and ends up having to start all over again. Bertha Dorset, who is married to George Dorset, is intent on destroying Lily’s reputation in order to cover up her affair with Ned Silverton. She mostly uses Lily as a “distraction” for George. But George and the others aboard the yacht actually start to like Lily, and it angers Bertha, who then starts spreading false rumors about Lily and George having an affair. This leads to the downfall of Lily’s character, which was the result of her indecisiveness.

In the book, we are given continuous hints throughout the story that Lawrence Selden and Lily Bart have undeniable feelings for one another. “Yes, she was matchless – it was the one word for her and he could give his admiration the freer play because so little personal feeling remained in it. His real detachment from her had taken place, not at the lurid moment of disenchantment, but now, in the sober after-light of discrimination, where he saw her definitely divided from him by the crudeness of a choice which seemed to deny the very differences he felt in her.” (Wharton, 347) Here we can see that Selden declares Lily as “matchless”, but we can also tell that he came to a conclusion: Lawrence Selden definitely has feelings for Lily Bart. This is an important turning point in the novel because Lily has a lot of problems, and Selden is the balance that Lily needs to stabilize her life. Selden may not have the excessive wealth that Lily desires, but he has the love and affection that Lily needs. By the time Lily and Selden both realize they need each other in their lives, it is too late for Lily.

In summary, Lily has her flaws and perfections that shape her character throughout the novel. Lily was given multiple options on who to spend the rest of her existence with. Gerty serves as a balance in the novel to demonstrate that not all women have the options Lily is given, and that independent women can carry out their lives just as normally. Lily’s financial instability and declining social status also play a key role in her demise. Selden is the counterweight to a lot of Lily’s problems, but fate and timing just does not seem to be in their favor. Though in the end of the book Lily passes away, we know she dies happy. Her mind is happily filled with thoughts of Lawrence Selden, and she has all of her debut paid off to Mr. Trenor. The tragic ending leaves us on a happy, peaceful note, despite all of the drama and misfortune Lily had gone through. Lily Bart was a perfect example on how the struggles of woman in the early 1900’s led to a heartfelt demise. All in all, we learn that Lily was blessed with some fortune, but did not how to approach situations or use it towards her advantage.